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ENG 4750-001: Studies in African American Literature

Jamila Smith

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ENG 4750
Spring 2017
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****Please don't contact me via D2L, as I often don't receive those emails.**

Course Description:

This course will explore the Black Arts Movement of the late 1960s to mid 1970s, with attention to the literary and artistic contributions of Black women. We will analyze the epistemological, historical, and sociopolitical frameworks that underscore their artistry, and apply these concepts to literary works, music, film, and performing arts. We will situate ourselves in conversations of the Women's Liberation Movement, Black feminism, sexism, class oppressions, and the impact of these intersections on the Black community.

Course Themes: Identity & Culture; Education & Society

Learning Goals:

- Understand key historical concepts of the period and apply this understanding to the analyses of artistic works by Black women.
- Expand communication skills in our discussions of the texts.
- Apply concepts of social and individual differences to mainstream discourse.
- Develop critical and creatively conscious papers and projects.

Required Texts:

I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings, Angelou

The Norton Anthology of African American Lit Vol. 2, Gates

Sula, Morrison

for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf, Shange

****Handouts will be distributed throughout the semester.**

Special Needs:

Students with documented disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services (581.6583) as soon as possible so we can work out appropriate accommodations.

Cell Phones:

Please put your cell phone on silent or vibrate during class time.

Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>).

Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

The Student Success Center:

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

The Writing Center:

I encourage you to use EIU's Writing Center located at 3110 Coleman Hall. This free service provides one-to-one conferences with writing center consultants who can help you with brainstorming, organizing, developing support, and documenting your papers.

The writing center is open to help any student from any major at any stage of his or her writing process, and its system of one-to-one conferences demonstrates value and respect for individual writers, all of whom can benefit from feedback about their works in progress.

To schedule an appointment, you can drop by the center (3110 Coleman Hall) or you can call 581-5929. The writing center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. On Friday hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Course Guidelines and Expectations:

1. As this is an interactive course, participation is required. You help create this atmosphere by making an effort to answer and ask questions during class discussion and group work, and by responding thoughtfully and respectfully to other people's comments and responses. Disrespect of me and/or your classmates, along with coming to class unprepared will not be tolerated. You will be asked to leave AND marked absent for the class period. Participation is worth **25 points** of your grade and includes self-directed discussion, questions posed during class, ability to answer questions indicative of close textual reading, and being alert during class sessions (i.e., no cell phone activity, sleeping, disruptive conversations, or use of laptops/Ipads/tablets, etc for anything other than work for my class). Points will be deducted for behaviors indicative of anything other than full participation. This is a collaborative learning experience, so constructive criticism and open discussion is encouraged. Attendance is obviously a prerequisite for participation, so if you have more than three (3) un-excused absences, you will lose 5 points per class session you miss.
2. Absences will only be excused when the following conditions are met: a) Circumstances that can be documented on paper (illness, police accident report, university events, etc) b) I receive notification PRIOR to the class that you will be unable to attend. If there is an assignment due the day you will be absent, please email it to me Prior to the start of class. In the same manner, I expect each student to be on time to class. If you happen to be tardy, please do not disrupt the class. If

you are over 10 minutes late to class with no prior notification, you will be marked absent.

3. You are expected to have ALL assignments prepared to turn in on the due date. All assignments should be typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt. font. Please proofread and edit all papers. **NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS ACCEPTED OR MAKE-UP WORK PROVIDED** unless you are in compliance with the extreme circumstances section above. Do not put extra space between paragraphs. Student information (name, class title, assignment) is single-spaced, in the top left-hand corner of your paper. Additionally, you are expected to bring the proper supplies with you to class each session, including the text we're reading.

Caveat:

If class participation begins to fade, I reserve the right to distribute a pop quiz over the readings and/or class lectures. The quiz will be worth 10 points and will be taken from the final project.

Assignments:

**Please be prepared for possible changes.*

1. Reading Reflections (50 points total): As I am interested in your process of unpacking and understanding the Black Arts Movement through the contributions of Black women, you will produce three (3) typed 1-page reading reflections each week for ten weeks. You may write throughout the process of our weekly readings, conversations, films, etc. For example, during week 2, we will conclude a historical trajectory of the Black Aesthetic, so I'd like you to discuss initial connections to the theme of this course through the readings, questions/confusions that arise, thoughts on the influence of Black men and women, etc. You don't have to follow this format of reflection each week, but your reflections should always be rooted in critical thinking about the novels/films/handouts. Each **set** of reflections is worth 5 points. These reflections will be handed to me on Fridays. *You do not have to produce reflections for Week One.

2. Essays (50 points total): As we journey together through the texts, I will provide you with a writing prompt based on the questions, comments, and critiques derived from our discussions. This prompt will be the foundation of your 5-7 page essays. Please note that each of the two (2) essays must be grounded in theory and supported by textual evidence. I highly encourage writing from personal narrative to form and further your position(s).

Essay One Due: February 15th 25 points

Essay Two Due: March 22nd 25 points

3. "Moved to Create!" (30 points) This is your opportunity to unleash your inner artist and create response pieces to artists that have piqued your interest. Guidelines aren't too rigid with this assignment, but I will provide suggestions to help you get started. **DUE April 10th**

3. Final Projects (45 points): I believe that students, particularly those in the latter stages of the undergraduate experience, should be able to create a proposal for a final project

and execute it in such a manner that demonstrates a robust grasp of subject matter, extensive research, and creativity. This is your opportunity to combine all that you've learned this semester with what you still seek. You will design and implement a final project that speaks to *your* current and/or future research interests surrounding the theme of this course. Additional discussion of this assignment will occur throughout the semester. **DUE April 28th**

Schedule of Readings

Homework (reading and writing) is assigned at my discretion and its completion is a requirement for the next class session.

****For this course, I've decided that we won't adhere to a rigid schedule of readings. We will cover multiple artists, simultaneously, so I'd like you to be open to flexibility during our time together.**

Here are a few important dates for you to log:

Week Two: 1/16 **MLK Day Observed-NO SCHOOL**

Week Three: 1/27 and 1/28-Lions in Winter Festival

Week Six: 2/15 Essay One **DUE AND** 2/17 Lincoln Day-**NO SCHOOL**

March is Women's History and Awareness Month (WHAM). More details to come.

Week Ten: **Spring Break**

Week Eleven: 3/22 Essay Two **DUE**

Week Fourteen: 4/10 "Moved To Create **DUE**; 4/11& 4/12 English Studies Student Conference

Week Sixteen: **4/28 Final Class/Final Projects Due**

Evaluation:

Participation	25 points
Reading Reflections	50 points
Critical Essays	50 points
"Moved to Create"	30 points
Final Project	45 points
Total	200 points

Grading:

180-200=A 179-160=B 159-140=C 139-120=D 119 or below=F

****Dr. Smith's Advice****

If at any point throughout the semester you are confused or unclear about the expectations of the course, course material, a grade you've received, or any other matters, I strongly encourage you to speak with me during office hours. It is my hope that all students succeed in this course, but I can only help if I'm aware of a problem.